Sacraments are outward signs instituted by Christ, and entrusted to the Church, to give grace.

Catholics often talk about sacraments, but what are they exactly? It can be a confusing term, especially for someone who is not familiar with Catholicism or Christianity.

What is a sacrament?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives a basic definition of a sacrament.

> ***The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.*** *The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions. (CCC 1131)*
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> ***Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ****, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant. (CCC 1116)*

One way to talk about the sacraments is to think of them as **channels,** through which God gives to the faithful **particular graces at specific points in their life.**

We all need help in our walk of life, especially in such areas as **marriage**. In this case, God has given us a sacrament through which we receive the graces (divine help) we need to fulfill our duties.

The *Compendium of the Catechism*, explains this aspect of sacraments as well.

> *Sacramental grace is the grace of the Holy Spirit which is given by Christ and is proper to each sacrament.* ***This grace helps the faithful in their journey toward holiness and so assists the Church as well to grow in charity and in her witness to the world.*** (231)

The seven sacraments of the Catholic Church all find their origin in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and in the Church he founded. The sacraments are not something the Church can change, as they come from Jesus himself.

The seven sacraments instituted by Christ are as follows:

> *Baptism*
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> *Confirmation*
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> *Holy Eucharist*
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> *Penance*
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> *Anointing of the Sick*
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> *Holy Orders*
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> *Matrimony*

The purpose of this article is to give a basic introduction to the concept of the sacraments. and is not meant to provide an in-depth theological examination.